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JEAN VALJEAN

By VICTOR HUGO

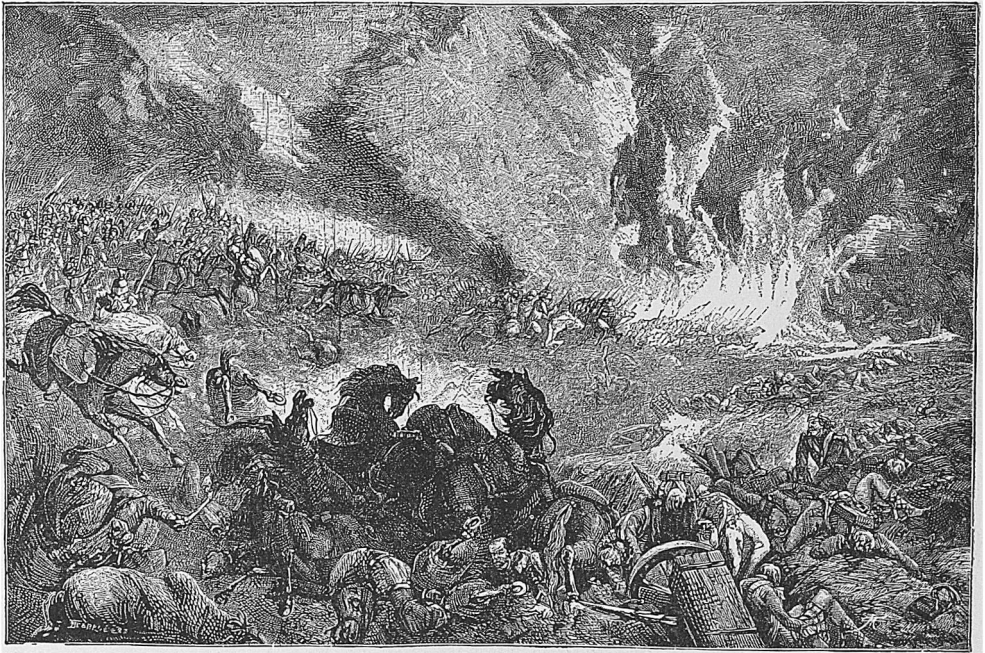
The hero-story of "Les Misérables," condensed by Ernest Ingersoll, and illustrated by Bayard, Brion, Des Broses, De Neuville, Marie, Scott and Valnay.

CHAPTER VIII

COSETTE'S DELIVERANCE

JEAN VALJEAN was recaptured, and condemned to be returned to the prison at Toulon for the remainder of his life.

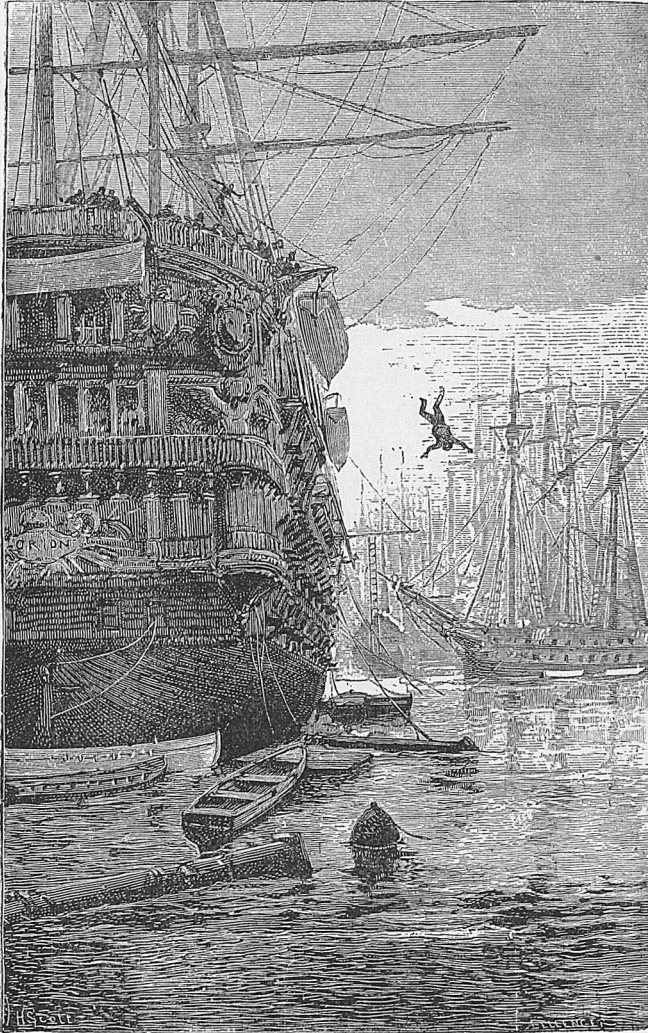
One day he was at work with a gang of fellow convicts upon a man-of-war in the harbor, when a sailor fell from the end of a yard-arm, but caught himself by a rope where he hung, but must drop as soon as his strength gave out. No one



THE HOLLOW WAY OF OHAIN, AT WATERLOO

could even attempt to save him without the most imminent risk, and no one volunteered, until Jean Valjean begged permission to try the hopeless if not fatal task, and the instant the fetters were knocked from his feet ran up the rigging. Before the eyes of a breathless crowd his almost superhuman strength and courage enabled him to lift the sailor into safety. Then he himself turned to descend by a stay, but suddenly relaxing his hold, as if overcome by his exertions, he pitched headlong into the sea, between that vessel and another beside it. Every effort was made to save the hero's life, and thousands would have petitioned at that moment for his pardon, but nothing whatever was discovered of the lost man.

A few days after that an old, but robust traveler, came on foot at evening to the inn of the Thenardiers at Montfermeil. In the wood on the edge of the village he encountered a poor, half-naked, nearly starved, little girl, frantic with fear of the darkness and terror of punishment, tugging at a huge bucket of water. He took it from her hand and inquired her name.



OVERBOARD! IN THE HARBOR OF TOULON

"Cosette," she replied.

The traveler spent the night at the inn. He incurred the contempt of the greedy proprietors by his few simple wants, but excited their astonishment by the interest he took in the little girl, whom they treated on a level with the dog and the cat—often worse than either—and openly wished that they might be rid of.

This whole chapter might be given to a recital of the dreadful scorn and tyranny which these people exercised toward this mite of a girl, scarcely eight years old, for whom they set tasks only fit for an adult, and kept in a squalor and ignorance denied to a serviceable animal; and it was intensified in its bitterness for the child and its horror for the traveler, by reason of the fact that the two daughters of the family, Eponine and Azelma, were dressed and cared for, and given

playthings, as far above what might have been expected of these two ruffians as their crushing of Cosette was below what any human heart would seem capable of.

The traveler sat in the shadows of the dingy taproom and listened in silence to the gossip of the villagers over their cups. They talked of a mysterious person who had been reported as seen digging in a secluded part of the neighboring forest. Some believed he was a searcher for hidden treasures; others denied the fact altogether; but most had a superstitious belief in some mysterious visitor



THE HIGHLAND PIPER IN THE CENTRE OF THE
FAMOUS "SQUARE" AT WATERLOO

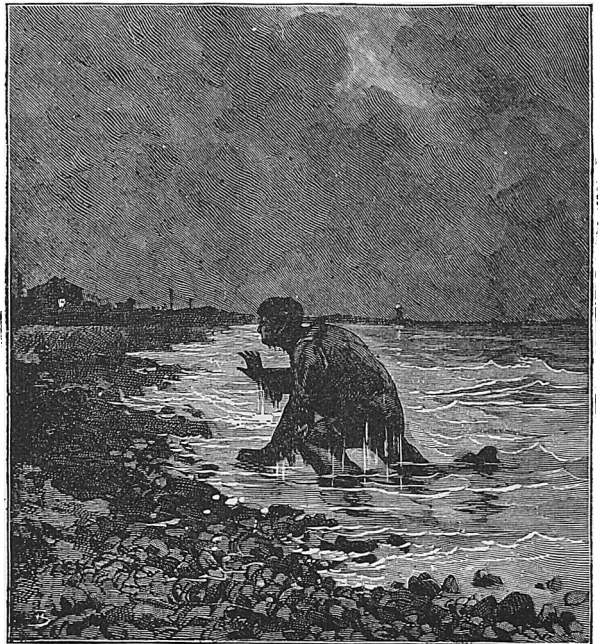
—perhaps a supernatural one, and certainly portending no good. This led to reminiscences of Waterloo, for the battlefield was not far away, and some of the men had been there; and they retold incidents of the cavalry charges, of the awful carnage at the hidden way of Ohain, of the heroic last square, and that famous piper of the Seventy-fifth Highlanders. The traveler listened to this, but his eyes and mind were really bent upon Cosette.

He saw her degradation and his blood boiled, until at last he was moved to an injudicious display of wealth, for he went out and bought the most resplendent doll in town, and showered money and playthings upon "the brat," until he aroused not only the wonder but the cupidity of The-

nardier and his dragon of a wife, who at length concluded that he must be a rich grandfather of the child, in disguise.

When, therefore, on the next morning, he proposed to relieve them of their burden of charity, they made him pay 1,500 francs for her; and followed him to extort more, but he suddenly disappeared, as was his wont.

That night Jean Valjean, for of course it was he, alighted from the stage in the outskirts of Paris, and plunged into the labyrinth of narrow crooked streets which characterized one of the poorest quarters of Paris half a century or more ago, making his way toward the Boulevard de l'Hopital. The day had been strange and full of emotions for Cosette; they had eaten behind hedges bread and cheese bought at isolated wine-shops; they had often changed vehicles, and gone a distance on foot. She did not complain, but she felt tired, and Jean Valjean took her on his back, where, without letting loose of Catharine, her great new doll, she laid



JEAN VALJEAN'S ESCAPE TO THE SHORE

her head on his shoulder and fell asleep.

At length he came to a tall, tumble-down, utterly desolate-looking house, numbered 50-52 and long called Maison Gorbeau—a gruesome relic of a still older Paris; and entering it proceeded to a room under the roof.

CHAPTER IX

A STILL-HUNT IN PARIS

FOR twenty-five years Jean Valjean had never loved anything. The other tender emotions of his youth, if he had any, had fallen into an abyss. When he saw Cosette, when he carried her off, he felt his soul stirred up; all the passion and affection there was in him were aroused and rushed toward this



THE MYSTERIOUS BEING IN THE FOREST



HELPING THE LARK

child. He went up to the bed on which she slept, and he trembled with joy; he felt pangs like a mother, and knew not what it was, for the great and strange emotion of a heart which is preparing to love is a very obscure and sweet thing. Still, as he was fifty-five years of age, and Cosette eight, all the love he might have felt during life was melted into a species of ineffable glow. This was the second white apparition he met: the bishop had caused the dawn of virtue to rise on his horizon, and Cosette now produced that of love.

The first days passed in this bedazzlement. On her side Cosette became unconsciously different, poor little creature! All had repulsed her, the Thénardiens, their children and other children; she had loved the dog which died, and after that nothing and nobody would have anything to do with her.

Hence from the first day, all that felt and thought within her began to love the good man; and she experienced what she had never known before, a feeling of expansion. Cosette's instinct sought a father, in the same way as Jean Valjean's sought a child, and to meet was to find each other.

Weeks passed away and these two led a happy life in this wretched garret, which was attended by an old woman named Bourgon, who lived in an adjacent attic. Her protector set to work to teach Cosette to read, and she called him "Father." He spent hours in watching her dress and undress her doll and listening to her prattle. From this moment life appeared to him full of interest; men seemed to him good and just; he no longer reproached anyone in his thoughts, and perceived no reason why he should not live to a great age, now that this child loved him. He saw a future illumined by Cosette, as by a delicious light.

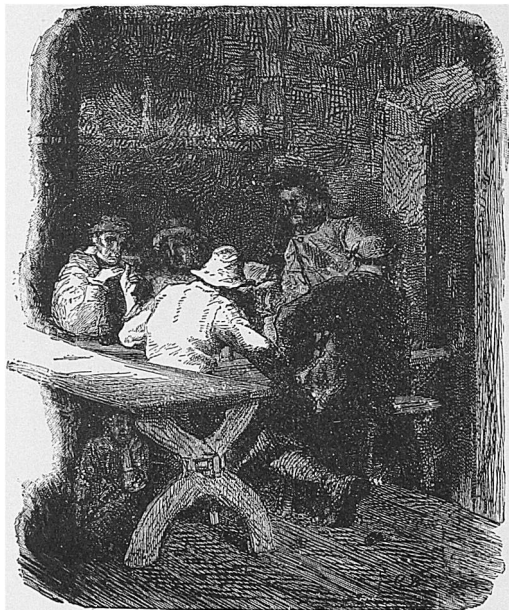
Jean Valjean was so prudent as never to go out by day; but in the evening he and Cosette would go and walk together, to her great joy, though they chose the most retired and squalid streets. Sometimes he went out alone, and by-and-bye the shy, silent man, in the old hat, yellow coat and black breeches, became notorious in the neighborhood for his furtive gifts to beggars. This came to the ears of the old woman who swept their room, and increased the curiosity which



THE CHILDREN OF THE INN

the other behavior of this pair had excited in her curious and spiteful mind. She peeped and questioned and pried, until once she saw a thousand-franc note, and came to believe the old yellow coat lined with them.

One of the beggars to whom Jean Valjean always gave a trifle was an old, bent man, who sat on the steps of a church. One night toward the end of winter, and about the time when the spiteful old woman had carried her spying to its utmost limit, he passed this old beggar and, as usual, stopped to give him a few sous, then gave a start at the face which looked up at him from the rags and whined out the usual thanks. It was like the familiar countenance and yet unlike. Jean Valjean fancied that he had seen by the flickering light of the lamp, not the placid



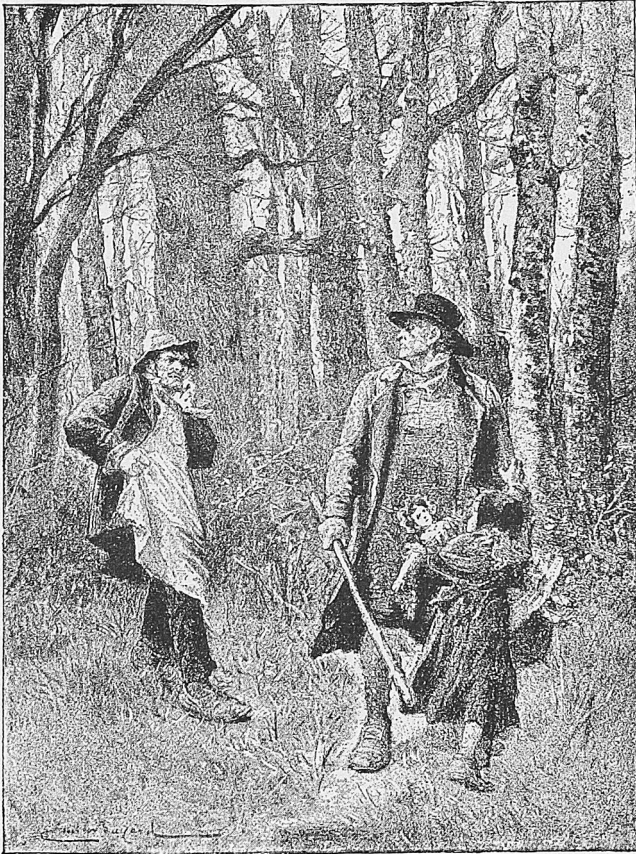
TAP-ROOM LOUNGERS AT THENARDIER'S

and devout countenance of the old beadle, but a terrifying and familiar face. He recoiled, amazed and petrified, not daring to breathe, and went home sorely troubled in mind. He hardly dared confess to himself that the face which he fancied he had seen was Javert's.

That night, having put all that he could carry into his pockets, he and Cosette quitted the house and turning from the boulevard entered the streets, making frequent turnings and often retracing steps to make sure they were not followed. The moon was at its full, and Valjean slipped along the dark side of the street,

and cautiously watched the bright side. Cosette walked on without asking questions, for she was accustomed, not only to a hard fate, but to the singularities of her companion. He had no settled plan or scheme. He was not absolutely certain that it was Javert, but was resolved not to return to his attic, and, like an animal driven from its lair, simply sought a hole in which to hide himself until he could find a better lodging.

As the clock struck eleven he passed the police office in the Rue de Pontoise. A few minutes later instinct made him look round, and he distinctly saw three men, who were following him rather closely, pass under the office lamp. One of these men turned into the office, and another, who was in front, appeared to him decidedly suspicious.



THENARDIER FAILS TO RECOVER COSETTE

"Come, child," he said to Cosette, and hastened out of the Rue de Pontoise. He made a circuit and eventually turned into the Rue des Postes. There was an open space here where the moon threw a bright light, and Jean Valjean hid himself in a doorway. Three minutes had not elapsed when the men appeared. There were now four of them, all tall, dressed in long brown coats and round hats, and holding large sticks in their hands. They stopped in the center of the square, and formed a group as if consulting, and apparently undecided. The leader turned and pointed with his right hand and Jean Valjean recognized Javert perfectly.

Uncertainty ceased for Jean Valjean; but fortunately it still lasted with the men. He took advantage of their hesitation. He left the gateway in which he was concealed and pushed on towards the region of the Jardin des Plantes. As Cosette was beginning to feel tired, he took her in his arms and carried her. No one was passing, and in a few strides he reached the Goblet pottery, skirted the Jardin des Plantes and reached the quay. At the Austerlitz bridge he handed the tollman a sou.



IN THE ATTIC

"It is two sous," said the man, "you are carrying a child who can walk."

He paid, though vexed that his passing had given rise to any remark.

After crossing the bridge, he saw a little at his right building-yards towards which he proceeded, Cosette walking again. In order to reach them he must cross an open, brilliantly-lighted space, out of which there led away a narrow, dark little street which seemed expressly made for him. At its entrance he looked back at the bridge, and saw that four shadows were crossing it rapidly toward him. He gave a start like an almost recaptured animal and hurried down the little street, hoping to pass through it into the sparsely settled suburbs.



THE MAISON GORBEAU

After going three hundred yards he came to a spot where the road formed two forks, and Jean Valjean had before him, as it were, the two branches of a Y. Which should he choose? He did not hesitate, but took the right one, because it went in the direction of the country. Still they did not walk very rapidly, for Cosette checked Jean Valjean's pace, and hence he began carrying her again, and Cosette laid her head on his shoulder and did not say a word. At times he looked back, while careful to keep on the dark side of the street. The first twice or thrice that he turned he saw nothing, the silence was profound, and he continued his walk with a little more confidence. All at once he fancied that he saw something moving on the dark part of the street just passed. He rushed forward, hoping to find some side-lane by which he could escape. He reached a wall, which, however, did not render further progress impossible, for it was a wall skirting a cross-lane, into which the street Jean Valjean had entered ran.

He looked to the right: the lane ran for some distance between barns or sheds, and then stopped. The end of the blind alley, a tall white wall was distinctly visible. To the left the lane was open and at a distance of about two hundred yards fell into a street. On that side safety lay. At the moment when Jean Valjean turned to his left in order to reach this street he saw at the angle formed by the street and the lane a species of black and motionless statue; it was evidently a man posted there to prevent him passing. The fugitives fell back.

The part of Paris where Jean Valjean now was, situated between the Faubourg San Antoine and la Rapee, was one of those which have been utterly transformed by modern works. The fields, the timber-yards, and old buildings have been removed, and in place of them are new wide streets, arenas, circuses, hippodromes, railway stations and a prison, Mazas—progress as we see with its corrective. Half a century back, the precise spot where Jean Valjean now stood was called “le Petit Picpus.”



THE SUSPECTED BEGGAR



THE LIGHT THROUGH THE KEY-HOLE

Little Picpus then had almost the monastic look of a Spanish town. The streets were scarcely paved, and hardly any houses lined them. The quarter consisted of gardens, convents, lumber-yards and kitchen-grounds, and there were a few low houses, with walls as lofty as themselves, and here and there a wine-shop.

Of the Y of streets here, which has been mentioned, the left-hand branch was Petite Rue Picpus, and the right-hand branch Rue Polonceau. The two branches of the Y were joined at their summit by a sort of cross-bar called Rue Droitmur. To advance meant falling into a sentry's clutches; to fall back was to throw himself into Javert's arms. Jean Val-

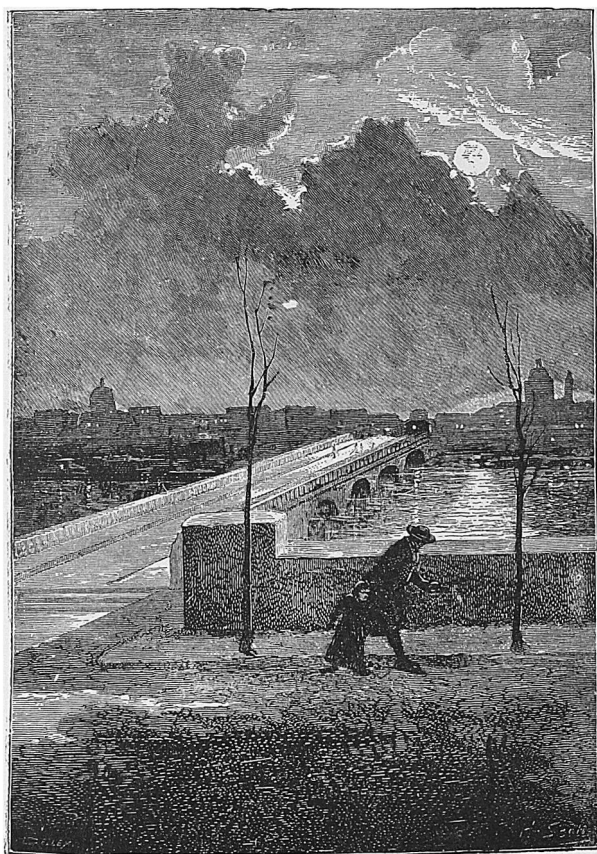
jean felt himself caught in a net which was being slowly hauled in, and looked up to Heaven in despair.

It was here that Jean Valjean was, when, on perceiving the tall black shadow, standing on watch at the corner of the Rue Droit-mur and the Petite Rue Picpus, he fell back, for he was doubtless watched by this phantom. What was to be done? He had no time to retrograde, for what he had seen moving in the shadow in his rear a few moments previously, was, of course, Javert and his squad.

The lane out of the Rue Polonceau, which has been mentioned—a prolongation of Rue Droit-mur—was bounded by ancient edifices, and terminated in a high wall resting against a tall, gloomy and apparently empty building, with only a single window in the gable. A hurried examination showed him that it would



THE NEW DOLL



THE BRIDGE OF AUSTERLITZ

be impossible to scale this front to the window, and even if he could do so he would surely be observed. There was a great gate in the wall, over which he could see the branches of a tree, but this gate proved to be only a make-believe—it was walled up behind its old planks.

At this moment a hollow, cadenced sound began to grow audible, and, peeping around the corner, Jean Valjean perceived that seven or eight soldiers were entering the street. These soldiers, at the head of whom he distinguished Javert's tall form, advanced slowly and cautiously, exploring all corners, doorways and alleys. Judging from the pace at which they marched and the halts they made, they would require about a quarter of an hour to reach the spot where Jean Valjean was. It was a frightful thought—a few moments sep-

arated Jean Valjean from the awful precipice which yawned before him for the third time. And the galleys were now not merely the galleys, but Cosette lost forever; that is to say, a life resembling the interior of a tomb.

Only one thing was now possible. Jean Valjean, as a convict, had become a perfect master in the incredible art of raising himself, without a ladder, by the mere muscular strength of holding on by shoulders and knees, in the right-angle of a wall. He measured with his eye this wall before him, above which he saw the linden tree, and found that it was only about eighteen feet. But the difficulty was Cosette, for she could not climb a wall. Abandon her? Jean Valjean did not think of it, but where was he to find a rope? The man's desperate glance fell on the lamp-post in the blind alley. In those days there were no gas-lights in the

streets of Paris; at nightfall lamps were lit, except on moonlit nights, like this one, at regular distances, which were pulled up and down by a rope that crossed the street and fitted into a groove in a post; the end of the rope was kept in an iron box under the lantern. Jean Valjean leaped across the street, burst the lock of the box with the point of his knife, and a moment later was again by Cosette's side.

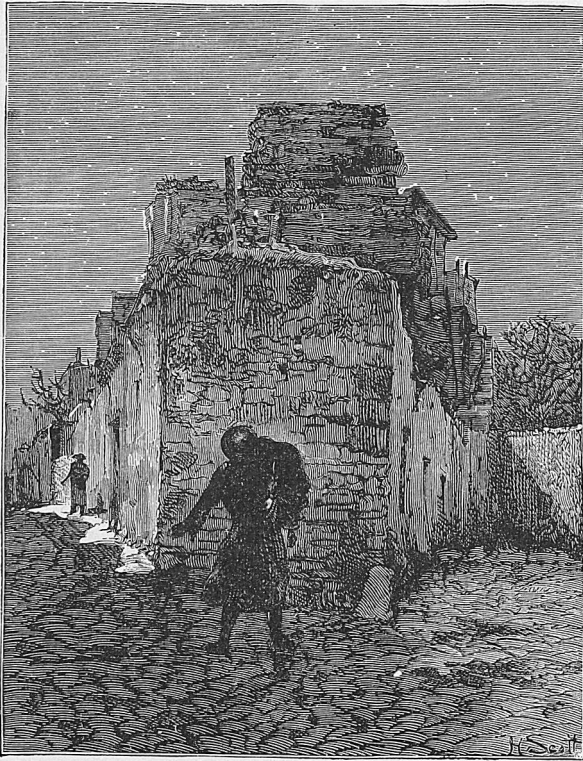
"Father," she whispered, "I am frightened; who is coming?"

"Silence," the unhappy man replied, "it is Madame Thenardier."

The child trembled, and he added, "Do not say a word, but leave me to act; if you cry out or sob, she will catch you and take you back again."

Then, without hurry, but with a firm and sharp precision, he undid his cravat, fastened it under Cosette's armpits, fastened the rope to the cravat, took the other end in his teeth, took off his shoes and stockings, which he threw over the wall, and began raising himself in the corner of the wall with as much certainty as if he had cramping irons under his heels and elbows. Half a minute had not elapsed ere he was astride the coping and Cosette heard his low voice telling her to lean against the wall. She obeyed and felt herself lifted from the ground and in a moment found herself safe on the top.

Jean Valjean placed her on his back, and crawled along the wall to a building inside it, whose roof descended nearly to the ground, grazing the linden tree.



AT THE Y OF STREETS

He had just reached the sloping roof, and had not yet loosed his hold of the coping, when a violent uproar announced the arrival of the patrol, and he heard Javert's thundering voice:

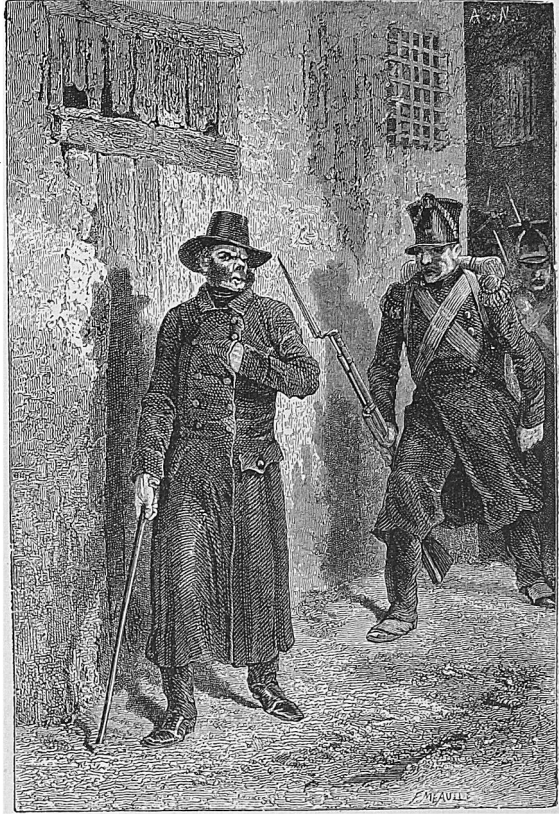
"Search the blind alley; all the streets are guarded, and I will wager that he is in it."

The soldiers rushed forward. Jean Valjean slipped down the roof, reached the linden tree, and leapt on the ground. Either through terror or courage the child had not said a word.

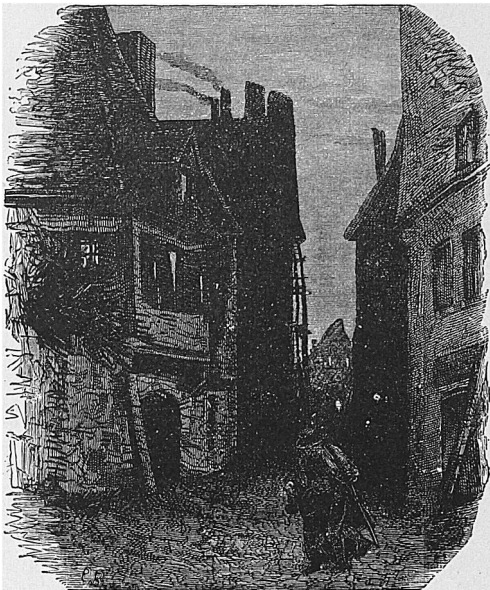
CHAPTER X

A PLACE OF MYSTERY

JEAN VALJEAN found himself in a large garden of most singular appearance—one of those gloomy gardens that appear made to be looked at in the winter, or by night. The large and seemingly vacant edifice of the Rue Droitur had two façades looking into this garden at right angles, and



JAVERT AND THE PATROL



THE CUL DE SAC GENROT

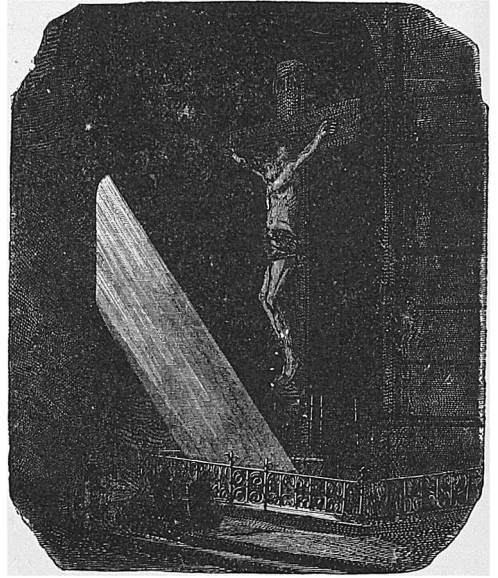
these façades were even more melancholy than those outside. All the windows were barred, and not a single light could be seen, while at the upper window there were scuttles as in prisons.

Jean Valjean's first care was to put on his shoes and stockings and then enter a shed which he saw near by. The noise and oaths of the baffled patrol gradually ceased, and the solitude in which he presently found himself was so strangely calm, that the furious uproar so lately close at hand did not even cast the shadow of a trouble over it.

All at once a new sound burst forth; a heavenly, divine, ineffable sound, as ravishing as the other had been horrible. It was a hymn that issued from

the darkness, a dazzling blending of prayer and harmony in the dark and fearful silence of the night; female voices, but such voices as do not belong to earth, and resemble those which the dying begin to hear. This chant came from the gloomy building that commanded the garden, and it seemed like a choir of angels approaching in the dark. Cosette and Jean Valjean fell on their knees, for they knew not what it was, they knew not where they were. The singing ceased; all had become silent again; there was no sound in the garden, no sound in the street; all that that threatened, all that that reassured, had faded away. The ground was damp, the shed open on all sides, and the man took off his coat and wrapped Cosette up in it to shield her against the cutting wind. Then he

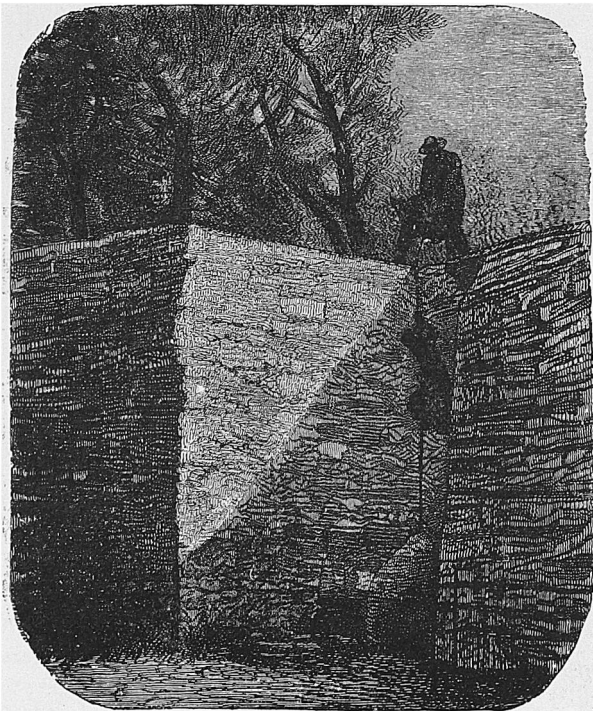
bade her lie down and wait for him a minute. He left the shed and walked along the large building in search of some better shelter. He came to doors, but they were closed, and there were bars on all the ground-floor windows. After



THE GREAT CROSS OF THE CHAPEL

passing the inner angle of the edifice he noticed some arched windows, and perceived a faint light. He raised himself on tip-toe and looked through one of the windows. They all belonged to a large hall, paved with stone flags, in which nothing could be discerned except a little light and great shadows.

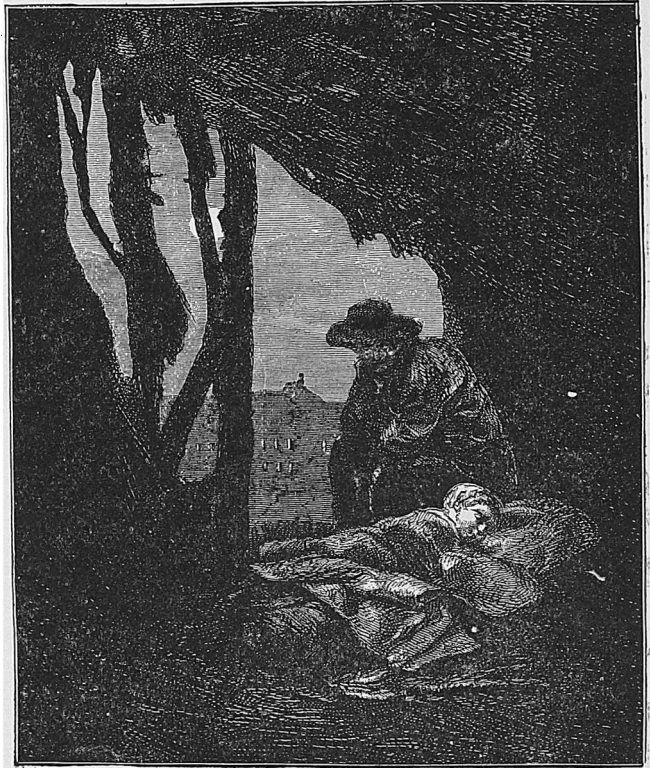
What was this strange house? An edifice full of nocturnal mystery, calling souls in the darkness, with the voice of angels, and when they arrive, suddenly offering them this frightful vision; promising to open the bright gate of Heaven, and instead, opening the horrible gate of the tomb! Cold, anxiety, apprehension, and, the emotion of the night, brought on a real fever, and all the man's ideas were con-



IN THE CORNER OF THE WALL

fused in his brain. He went back to Cosette; she was asleep with her head upon a stone. He sat down by her side and began gazing at her; gradually, as he looked, he grew calm and regained possession of his freedom of mind.

He clearly perceived this truth, the basis of his future life, that, so long as she was there, so long as he had her by his side, he would require nothing except for her, nor fear anything save on her account. Still, through the reverie into which he had fallen, he had heard for some time past a singular noise, like a bell being rung, and it was in the garden. It could be heard distinctly, though faintly, and resembled the Alpine cattle-bells, which produce a gentle melody at night in the grazing fields. This noise made Jean Valjean turn, and he saw that there was some one in the garden. A being looking like a man was walking among the melon-frames, rising, stooping, and stopping with regular movements, as if he was dragging or stretching out something on the ground. This man was apparently lame. Jean Valjean gave the continual trembling start of the unhappy.



WAITING IN THE OLD SHED

Just now he had shuddered because the garden was deserted, and now he shuddered because there was some one in it. He gently raised the sleeping child and carried her behind a mass of old furniture. Cosette did not stir. From this spot he observed the movements of the being in the melon-ground. The strange thing was the sound of the bell following this man's every motion. If he made a sudden movement a little peal followed it, and it was evident that a bell was fastened to his body—but why? While asking himself this question he touched Cosette's hand: it was chilled. He shook her sharply, but she did not awake.

"Can she be dead?" he said to himself, and he rose, shivering from head to foot.

The most frightful thoughts crossed his mind pell-mell. He remembered that sleep in the open air on a cold night might be fatal. How was he to warm her? How was he to wake her? It was absolutely necessary that Cosette should be in bed before a fire within a quarter of an hour.

Jean Valjean rushed from the shed and walked straight up to the man whom

he now saw was covering the melons, and addressed him with the cry, "One hundred francs."

The man started and raised his eyes.

"One hundred francs to be gained," Jean Valjean continued, "if you will find me a shelter for the night."

"Why, is it you, Father Madeleine!" the man exclaimed.

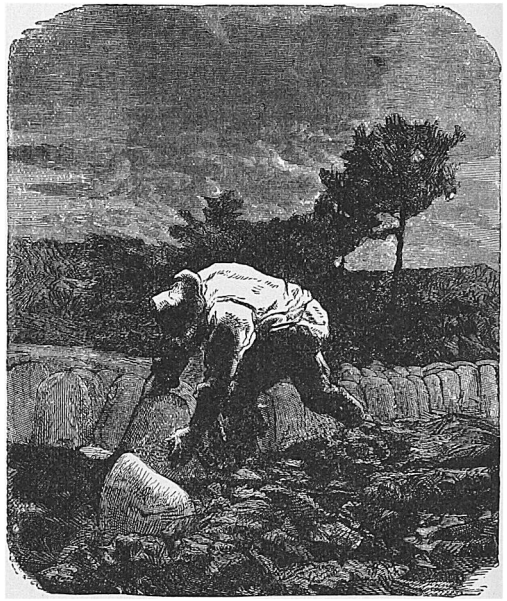
The name uttered thus in the darkness at this strange spot, by this strange man, made Jean Valjean recoil for he expected everything save that. The man who addressed him was a stooping, lame old man, dressed nearly like a peasant, and wearing on his left leg a leathern kneecap, from which hung a rather large bell. It was impossible to distinguish his face, which was in the shadow; still the man had doffed his bonnet and said all in a tremor:

"Oh, Lord, how did you get here, Father Madeleine? which way did you come in? Why, you must have fallen from Heaven. And then, what a state you are in! you have no cravat, no hat, and no coat! But how *did* you get in here?"

One word did not wait for the next; the old man spoke with a rustic volubility in which there was nothing alarming; and it was all said with a mixture of stupefaction and simple kindness.



THE CONFERENCE IN THE COTTAGE



FAUCHELEVENT COVERING HIS MELONS

"Who are you? and what is this house?" Jean Valjean asked.

"Oh, Lord," the old man exclaimed; "that is too strong. Why, did you not get me the situation, and in this house, too? What, don't you recognize me?"

"No," said Jean Valjean, "and how is it that you know me?"

"You saved my life," the man said.

He turned, a moonbeam played on his face, and Jean Valjean recognized old Fauchelevent.

"Ah!" he said, "it is you? Oh, now I recognize you."

"That is lucky," the old man observed, reproachfully.

"And what are you doing here?" Jean Valjean asked.

"Why, I am covering my melons. I said to myself, there is a bright moon

and it is going to freeze, so I had better put these great coats"—showing his blankets of matting—"on my melons. You should have done the same."

Jean Valjean, feeling himself known by this man, at least under an old name, proceeded cautiously.

"And what is that bell?"

Old Fauchelevent gave an inimitable wink. "That? Oh, Lord, there are only women in this house, and lots of girls. It seems that I should be a dangerous one for them to meet, and so the bell warns them: when I come, they go."

"What is this house?"

"It is the Convent of the Little Picpus. But tell me," Fauchelevent continued, "how the deuce did you get here, Father Madeleine? for, though you are a saint, you are a man, and no men are admitted here."

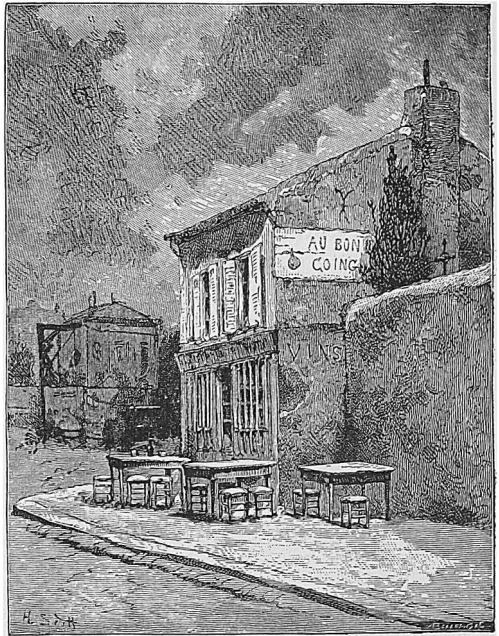
Jean Valjean walked close up to the gardener and said in a grave tone; "Fauchelevent, I saved your life."

"I was the first to remember it," was the reply.

"Well, you can do for me to-day what I did for you formerly."



THE CEMETERY GATE



A WINE-SHOP IN THE LITTLE PICPUS

Fauchelevent grasped Jean Valjean's muscular hands in his old wrinkled and trembling fingers, and for some seconds seemed as if unable to speak; at length he exclaimed—

"Oh! it would be a blessing from Heaven if I could repay you a slight portion! Save your life! M. Madeleine you can dispose of an old man as you please. What do you wish me to do?"

"I will explain: have you a room in which I can get warm?"

"I have a cottage, behind the ruins of the old convent in a corner which no one visits, with three rooms."

"Good," said Jean Valjean; "now I will ask two things of you. First, that you will tell nobody what you know about me; and, secondly, that you will not try to learn anything further."

"As you please."

"Enough; now come with me, and we will go and fetch the child."

He did not add a word, but followed Jean Valjean as a dog follows its master. In less than half an hour, Cosette, who had become rosy again by the heat of a good fire, was asleep in the old gardener's bed. Jean Valjean had put on his cravat and coat again; the hat thrown over the wall had been found and picked up, and Fauchelevent took off his kneecap and bell, which now adorned the wall by the side of a door. The two men were seated near the fire at a table on which Fauchelevent had placed a lump of cheese, biscuits, a bottle of wine, and two glasses, and the old man said to Jean Valjean as he laid his hand on his knee—

"Ah, Father Madeleine! you did not recognize me at once; you save people's lives and forget them afterwards! Oh, that is wrong, for they remember you; you are an ungrateful man."

And what about Javert? For once he had committed an error. It is needless to relate the chain of circumstances by which he had been led to suspect, and later to become convinced, that the man he pursued was really the Jean Valjean whom everybody supposed drowned at Toulon. He was wrong in not arresting him in the Rue Pontoise; and again in conferring with his colleagues in the moonlight.

Nevertheless, even when he perceived that the quarry had escaped from his net, he did not lose his head. Certain that the convict could not be very far off, he established ambuscades, and beat up the quarter the whole night through. The first thing he saw was the cut cord of the lantern. This was a valuable sign, which, however, led him astray so far that it made him turn all his attention to the Genrot blind alley. There are in this alley low walls, surrounding gardens which skirt open fields, and Jean Valjean had evidently fled in that direction. The truth is, that if he had gone a little further down the blind alley he would, in all probability have done so, and been a lost man.

(To be continued)



THE CONVENT GARDEN



THE HOUR OF EXERCISE